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# MOUNTAIN ROSES

*Selections from the poems of*

MITCHUN M. PAVITCHEVITCH

(ONE OF THE FOREMOST SERBIAN POETS FROM MONTENEGRO)

*Mitchun M. Pavitchevitch*

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(ONE OF THE FOREMOST SERBIAN POETS FROM MONTENEGRO)

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# MITCHUN M. PAVITCHEVITCH

A LYRICIST OF MONTENEGRO.

*Montenegrins are not only good warriors, as the world has finally acknowledged; they are natural, born poets. The entire Serbian race, of which the Montenegrins are the most florishing branch, is endowed with a powerful gift for epic poetry. There are several volumes of heroic national songs in which, like in the Iliad and Odyssey, the unknown Serbian bards, or minstrels, have glorified, from the earliest Middle Ages to this day, the deeds and feats of some favourite national hero or some important historic event. The whole nation participated in that enchanting occupation and we Serbians are as proud of our epopee as the Hellenes of their Iliad. In my opinion the word genius has been ridiculously abused by all nations, for the only possible* genius *is a people, not an* individuum. *And it is because the Serbian epopee has been composed by the Serbian people that it can justly be called ingenious. There is hardly any Serbian illiterate peasant to be found, in the remotest village of Serbia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia and other Serbian-speaking countries, who could not tell the story of our favourite hero Kralevitch Marko or some other knight, and tell it in a beautiful decasyllabic, blank verse. Hence it is small wonder to know that our present poet, Mitchun M. Pavitchevitch, can also sing in that pleasing and easy meter, for it is innate, inherent in every Serbian. Although self-taught,*

*Pavitchevitch is not an illiterate bard, like most of his countrymen; on the contrary he is comparatively a very learned man. Therefore his epic style differs considerably from that of the average Serbo-Montenegrin minstrel. Following the sublime example of one of the greatest poets of the Serbian race, Prince and Bishop Peter Petrovitch from the Niegosh, who has become immortal with his* Gorski Viyenatz (*Mountain Wreath*), *a drama in decasyllabic verse dealing with almost all principal problems in philosophy, our young poet Pavitchevitch has composed many a song in that very meter, not only because he thought it more appropriate for his philosophic and didactic subject matter but also because his thought is less hampered by that meter than it would be by any other in which his lyric subjects are treated. In his song "Serbian's Lament" the poet pours out his ire at the envious, malicious and despicable bureaucracy of his country and Serbia. He is a true son of the Montenegrin soil-tiller and warrior and although himself a high governmental official and a national deputy, the artfulness, duplicity and dishonesty of the officials, whose minds have been poisoned by vices and shining corruption of the European large cities, appear to his pure and simple heart uncommonly vile and he feels keenly a sort of* "mal du monde" *when he says*:

*"The world is but Hell of shameful battle*
*"In which lawly hungers and screams sadly*
*"In which vices triumph over virtue*
*"In which heart to cold stone is converted,*
*"In which life of highest knightly spirit*
*"Putrifies through stings of flies the smallest...."*

*Like every true Serbian from Montenegro he awaits*

*patiently and strives ardently for the "Great Aurora" that will down for all the Serbian-speaking lands, dreaming of the union of all the Serbians, Croatians and Slovenians into one independent state. In all his patriotic songs Pavitchevitch has shown but an average Serbian patriot with his innate love for liberty and there is hardly anything in those songs that is not common to all true lovers of the native soil. It is in his lyric songs that he shows all the might of his torrential verve which can hardly be excelled even by the greatest lyricist of the Western Europe. Though somewhat raw and unfinished in his manner of treatment he reveals art and conceals the artist. When Pavitchevitch is possessed by a true emotion he is inimitable, unattainable in beauty and subtleness of expression and in originality of rhetoric figures. Neither the darling of roses, Saadi, nor the tremulously sensitive Shelly could favourably compete with our Mitchun in exhuberance and opulent delicacy of thought in verses like these (depicting the usual thing called "Sunset"):*

*"When the Sun pours out the last jug*
*Of blood and flame that give life...."*

*or (speaking of his lady love who is young):*

*".... I shall plunder the jewels of thy youth".*

*Ovid, himself, would grow yellow with jealousy if he read these poems and Sapho—had she been Mitchun's contemporary—would stab the poet and spit venom at him if she knew that some of his verses had not been addressed to her. In his "Song of the Dusk", which I consider the finest he had ever sung, there is more of that quintessential requisite for any work of art*—genuine emotion—*than in the whole of "Bostan and Giulistan".*

*From the seventeen little volumes of Mitchun's poetry several have been translated in French, English, Bohemian, Russian, Roumanian and other languages and it is to be hoped that some day my esteemed friend and America's foremost poet, Underwood-Johnson, may transversify our real poet Mitchun as he has done, years ago, in co-operation of Mr. Tesla, with our skillfull versificator Jovan Jovanovitch-Zmaj. My rough and* verbatim *translations are really intended just to interest Mr. Johnson or some other gifted poet of this country to dip in the treasure of the Serbian poesy.*

W. M. Petrovitch.

New York City, January, 1918.

## WILSON'S SONG.

Boils, overpours the heart and blood rustles hot!...
And every atom of my being vibrates....
Why should my country with mournful brow
Look on and linger, while her children in chains are
dying?

I can hear the agony of dying millions
Under the dull sword of the maddened beast
And the heavy echo of the funeral bells
Amidst the giggling and screeming of the hungered
[Lucifer.

While the Old World is perishing and sobbing
Under the hoofs of reinless stallions,
It seems that every cry of his heart
Resounds along our manors.

Enough of pain and offenses!
Enough of mean silence that destroys souls
Wherefore should we endure the false idol
And let him murder us secretly?

To the battlefield of honour, freedom and right!
For battle will resurrect our dead
And bring a new epoch to the mankind!...

Our battle is the ire of the God-Man
Against the Antichrist of the twentieth century
And a cup of bitterness for the German Empire.

## THE SONG OF THE DUSK

When the Sun pours out the last jug
Of blood and flame that give life
And when stealthily the milde crepiscule canopies
Our village in which passions sleep,

I am waiting for thee, weary but awake
In the dark room of the old cottage,
Dreaming that, drunk and half-mad,
I shall plunder the jewels of thy youth.

And thou didst come, like the Goddess of Night
With black ribbons down thy marble shoulders
Like a lost ghost in the glooming solitude
Frou-frou'd thy vestments of silk.

While out of doors the dew was sighing
Through bosoms and hearts overpoured boiling blood,
The disordered hair was carressed and kissed
And mightily beat two capricious hearts.

And quiwered thy crimson lips
Before the end of a tempestuous passion
And like the wave that breaks against the rock
So were scattered the dreams fall of delight.

## SERBIAN'S LAMENT

Woman never man has been, o, never
(And Christ himself by men is condamnèd)
Falcon never has been crow, o, never
Nor coward knight fit for bloody duel.
Let very pearl be trown in the dirt:
For it's jewel in the empr'ror's crown.
Men at Moon shoot with their accursed rifles
And old witches hiss from ashes snake-like
Satan himself is not what men make him
Truth must vanquish lie, the cursèd falsehood!
Most beautiful rose in bush is hidden
From the spiteful hand of rascal children.
When the mighty thunder sounds and lightnings,
Fiever shaken are both pines and bushes.
But true hero knows not for tears, weeping:
Cowards crawl to feet of ugly murder'rs
I have always scorned the spiteful anger
For my bones are made of steel the hardes⁺.
Weak men alone condescend to begger
But the strong one beareth Cross on shoulders.
Fable tells us: "Man is sacred being";
But from science: "He's but beast the wildest".
I myself would rather trust to Darwin
Than to Moses, darling son of Bible.
Howe'r this be o, co-suf 'ring brother
Know that glory grows but after burial.

Through snow-storms of tragedy and evil
Have been rushing 'gainst my sweet ideals
Thundrous storms have given all their buffets
Have been falling from tops of rock cliffs.
Yes, but never has my soul, the proud
Knelt, o never, under painful burden
Standing firm like tree of God's plantation.
On the traces of my wretched ashes,
Will shine justice of God the eternal
But my spirit will fly high above them,
There where never room for devil has been.
All the blows of men and of Destiny
Will be scatter'd 'gainst the Forum of Truth.
Soul but whispers, pen but flies the slender
Hour has struck now for Shame to be known.
This world is but Hell of shameful battle
In which lawly hungers and screams sadly,
In which vices triumph ower virtue
In which heart to cold stone is converted
In which life of highest knightly spirit
Putrifies through strings of flies the smallest,
In which truth and equity of all men
Slumbers under wounds and chains so heavy,
In which Cross holds the blood-cover'd poniard
And protects the crimes of cruelest magnate.
Cato himself, if he were arisen,
Would fall in dust before mighty Caesar
Would spit at his honest plea of sometime,
From his Caesar would receive the medal.
In this world of lies and cursed mishaps
I know not who drinks nor who pays, brother,
To whom to-day empr'or's scepter's given

Him to-morrow they send to the madhouse
Those who to-day crowl in mud the dirt'est
Are to-morrow glorified in marble.
Demagogues cry with full voice their rages:
"We are offsprings of scientific progress".
Wild beast, slaughters his young in the cradle
And swears he's not animal the fearsome.
Wolf's neck they have with a bell distinguished
To him mild sheep as gift have been given
For their leader hare has been elected
Fierce hyaena for their saint approved.
Maybe will they for his deads so "humane"
Build a chapel to that Caligula,
And crucify Socrates the savant
"'Cause he leadeth this word to the gallows!"
Cicero they will call the greatest dullard
And Nero will they call the greatest Roman.
One day thou wilt see: the very donkey
Wearing medals won in bloody battles,
And the justest dying under burden
While the villain burdens him and beats him.
Diogenes all his life has, they say,
With a candle searched far true man, alas!
Even to-day in twentieth cent'ry,
Would he not find this man's very shadow!
O my Serbian, my belovèd brother,
Thine own children in their chains are suff'ring
I can hear them groan and cry so sadly
Under numb'rless sufferings and shaking.
The whip from Hell strikes thine chest so fragil.
Men have burried thine liberty cherish'd
All are strangers, those who thy hearth ravage

And thy sacred rights are torn and trodden.
Thine lov'd daughter wears sad veil the blackest
With thine sceptre others are now swagg'ring.
Suffer, carry, all these pains and troubles!
Destiny's whip ruins all and scatters.
Hark at Ocean! Is he not then murmur'ng?
But Time dries him. Who, can do like Time does?

## FROM THE CICLE OF "MONTENEGRINE TYPES"

### Drago Obrenov.

O carven, my home, my hearth!
'Tis in thee that I await the purple of the Great Aurora
And hope for the hour of near Resurrection
Which is to come to my forests,

Which are overflowing with despair and darkness.
Endure, o brothers, my fellow rebels!
In our sky that's full with icy rays
Will flutter the Eagle of Cross and Freedom.

And our land 'll once again be our parent;
All the Judas shall we inter for ever
And our own graves shall be incensed

By the sons that are born and coming like a tempest;
Over the ashes of our skeletons
Their brows shall be kissed by Victory.

## YOLE PILETICH

O my cherished hills of eternal rocks,
On whose breast darkest thistles grow,
(Never in ye white herds had grazed)
I know your wishes, your stories!

From my very cradle am I bound to ye,
Every foot of ye do I cherish mightily
For, 'tis within ye that my enchained forefathers
Died silently on rigid ropes.

O, my beloved mountains, ye monuments of terror,
'Tis on your hoar heads that I have elevated
Baricade which is stronger than the very sky.

Let no winter freeze your bosom again,
Ye shall never again be stricken by vermilion showers;
My people must have its own crust of bread.

## STOYAN KOVATCHEVITCH

When the silent crepiscule falls
Upon the mountains and rocky summits
And the most belated bird from the bush
Flies to its warm nest:

I, overloaded with burden of years,
Bent in twain under my black *struka**
Stricken by the thought about my son,
Am shedding worm tears on the naked rock.

In my broken breast and heart
I feel the pain and sorrow
And the dark thought wakens in me:
That I shall perish shamefully —

If Death should knock of sudden
Now when on all sides
Battles are raging, guns aroaring,
Should I be burried by women?!

And the old warrior's shaken by sobs
Alone, in the densest darkness.

'Tis morn..... The grave-diggers
Have dug the sire's eternal dwelling!

*A kind of narrow and long shawl worn by men over shoulder as an ornament.

## MOURNFUL REMINISCENCES.*

The day was heavy, livid and gloomy. The sun was dead and the sky burst in tears before the dark fate of my people....

But the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel this.....

Lead-like and eternal night was falling. The sea blew a mighty and mad sigh like a gravely wounded warrior; its tempestous waves mourned with their furious uproar, the infernal destiny of my people.

Yet, the stone-like hearts of the killers of body would not hear nor feel.....

The lightnings shone, the thunders burst asunder over our frost-clad forests. Centuries-stricken firs and mapple trees bent their heads down to the blood-stained ground and sobbed with the pain of an arrowed falcon.

And the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel.

Lovćen has been turned into a half-dead aligator from whose jaws a volcano of ire and vangence errupted against the underground cells of the merchants of Venice and debauched aristocracy. The soul of a deeply offended people wept.

But the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel.

A long flock of ravens—nuncioes of evil omen and death—fluttered about the gigantic monuments of our

*This song in prose is considered by the Serbians en masse as the author's finest production. It is really his farewel poem when he left Montenegro for America, and reminds somewhat the elegies which Ovid, Dante or Hugo wrote in exile.

glory and our legendary past, and, with their despair-stricking crowing warned the evil masters against demolishing of national shrines.

But the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel.

Thousands of ghosts of our great heroes wandered through the misty air and, through the mouth of the greatest of the great, sang: "Do not sacrilege the hills of our ashes!"

But the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel.

Below the Serbian Olympus was uttered the horrible cry of the Mother whose bosom has been rent asunder by her own child. From the Eagle Rock, with clipped wings and disordered hair, fled the shrieking oreads to lands foreign and unknown.

But the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel.

In the old hut the demented mother, uttering hellish shriekes, smothered her own babe that he may not become a slave.

But the stone-like hearts of the murderers would not hear nor feel.

Every atom of my being moved with horror.... I shed tears of a man who has for the first time felt the weight of human evil.... With clutched fists I rushed out from the darkness in search of daylight, that I may no longer hear the mournful song of my rocky mountains and enslaved forests. But, alas! I still discern the faint accords of the despairing tune of my crucified country, I hear the grinding of teeth, the heavy agony, the curse and anathema of my people who is buried in one grave.

## OUR HEROES.

### Lazar Pecirep

### I.

In the distant hut the fire is dying,
Lazar slumbers on a rock covered by his *struka*
Under his head lay his yatagan and his clear-voiced gun
And in his sack by his side a gruesome relic: a Turk's head.

From the summits of the snow-covered Kopitnik
In flocks were falling snow-flakes
And through the dark Velestovo a wild screaming:
'Tis hungry birds that flutter and mourn.

Around the sheep-fold wanders the spaniel,
Guarding the herd from Turks and wild beasts,
And, spying silently, keeps his master Pecirep
And the mare, till the Aurora.

And while the branches crack under the ice
And the melted snow is falling from roofs
Down to the depth maybe of the destroyed soul
Like gains of burning pains and sorrow.

*Haiduk** Lazar from his hard bed is rising
Through the night sparkles the flint
And to! the flame licks already the sooth-covered chains
And on the hearth dry branches crack.

---

*Free-lancer, or guerilla worrior. During the Ottoman misrule in the Balkans the Haiduks were the only control over the atrocities of the Turks.

## II.

'Tis morn.... The sun in the net of darkness
With shamefacedness like an orange in the branches,
Has hidden his visage in the morning mist
Ouly now and then throwing a ray upon the soil.

Velestovo is sinking amidst the mountain gorges
Amidst the rocks white homes are peeking
And from the precipices circles of smoke drive on
'Tis the shepherds who are making the fires of the
morning.

The bony old men wrapped in their strukas
Tell the story of the battles and campaigns
Burying their thoughts in the glorious past
They still dream of fresh insurrections.

Lazar leads his herd in the mountain slope,
While a lost bird sings somwhere her song
To the mountain summit, forests and liberty
While in Lazar's head thoughts are swarming:

"'Tis upon the stone that my mother bore me
'Tis upon the stone that I live for ever
'Tis stone that gave me the name of 'King of the Rock'
'Tis from the stone that I drink the remedy-carrying wate

"This stone is bathed in an oceaen of blood
It is the monument of my forefathers and the Holy Cross
So! the ancient blood is still running from his stone.
This stone has been defended and kept by the point of
sword.

Thus the *haiduk* in a trance thinks and dreams
And moved from his stony arm-chair,
But in the mountains, over the rocks and branches
One armed Turk after another is leaping forward.

To their encounter goes Lazar alone, without a simple comrad
Behind a rock he crouched, hid his sun-burnt face
Spying the band, dispising and scorning death.
But behold! The evil-doers Turks emerged.

Cocked his flint-lock on his *opanak's tops* *
Upon his yatagan his right hand fell
And with the left he fired his thin musket
And he shot the leader Tale of Onogosht.

While charging his musket he fired his two pistols
In the midst of the haughty usurpers
And lo! two more chiftains fell
And the forest re-echoed with cries of agony.

Over tree-trunks and rocks the Turks are fleing
Half-dead with terror as if thunder-stricken,
While the *haiduk* peacefully cuts off the heads of the three
And driving his flock, sombre and bloody he steps homeward.

Above the blood-stained Velestovo the san is sinking
And rotting in the abys are the three Turkish corpses
While at Nikshitch three Turkish spouses shed tears
Cursing bitterly Pecirep, the fierce haiduk.

---

*Opanak is a sort of home-made foot-ware in Serbia and Montenegro with a pointed top. Lazar, having lost in a duel his right arm, had the top of his left opanak split in two in the shape of a fork to support his flint which he fired with left hand and kept up his fight against the Turks.

## III.

On the mountaint summit juicy trees are budding
And through their trunks new life beams
Through the gorges and neck-breaking holes
The shepherd's song issues from his two-tubed flute.

Lazar gathers a band of thirty forest giants.
Who are eager for battle, blood and vengence
Through the hills, mountains and forests
Thirty comrads boldly fly like hurricane.

The first crepiscule descended from the Krnovo mountain
And in the manor of Pelević the early fires burn
While triumph the rows of pines the company faced;
And Lazar's soul was tormented by thirst for vegance.

And like an angry tiger he rushed in the manor
Two *bulas** were saved by the thick darkness
Shouts and cries broke the air, the bloody drama started
And a stained yatagan embraced Beća's two sons.

Through Velestovo at the break of the Dawn
Thunder-like muskets roar, the song re-echoes
Lazar avenges his brothers: Rado and Bogdan
While Beća Pelević at Nikšić sighs.

---

*Turkish women.

## IV.

Over the range of Kopitnik, the forest dwelling
Where spectres with fairies dance in a ring
Lazar was lain one day
Eager for breath and freedom.

And while the sun is dying behind the rocks
And the forest grass spreads luxuriously its perfumes
Lazar, covered with his black *struka*
On a stone, under arms was resting.

Beneath his feet one stone rolled after another
The point of haiduk's sword pricks his back
From Velestovo the Turks drove his herd
And Lazar bound is conducted to Gacko.

Over Lipnik ravens are fluttering
Over Gacko rings of smoke are rising
Lazar's face dark as midnight
Is liked by the flames of Janissaries' fires.

From the wrecks and ashes grass has grown
Thither oreads come every night
To visit the haiduk's grave
While Gacko still slumbers under the foreign yoke.

## PETAR MRKONJIĆ*

Thou art come like a hurricane, with the face of a saint
Under the load of pains that agonize the soul
And like a marevelous, gigantic image
Fluttered over the battlefield with thy big heart.

That was the moment of a swallen tide
Of dolors and doubts, when souls freeze
A day of summer sun, storm and winter
When we rushed through death: to the grave or victory.

The bones of thousands giants were cracking
And the hurricane of infernal fire was boiling
Over Serbia: mother of silent heroes.

While thy word, from the sombre rock
"Forward, heroes!... like a midnight storm—
Thundered ..... and was the triumph of the terrible
struggle.....

*This is the name of King Peter Karageorgevitch under which he led the insurrection in Herzegovina.

MITCHUN M. PAVITCHEVITCH

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